

MAJOR TRADE ROUTES AND MEANS OF SECURITY IN MEDIEVAL INDIA IN THE PRISM OF EUROPEAN TRAVELER'S ACCOUNT

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ABSTRACT

Transport and the means of communication form an integral part of commercial activity. In medieval India, process of the building of roads and routes began with the rise of the second Afghan Empire. The key feature of successful administrative system of Sher Shah was the construction of vital roads which were well linked with the capital, Agra and ran in various directions. The greatest road amongst them ran from Sonargaon (Dacca) to the Indus. Other roads built by him were- Agra to Burhanpur, Agra to Jodhpur and Chittor and from Lahore to Multan. The roads were well planned and well connected with all the strategic frontier cities. For the comfort and convenience of travelers, not only were shady trees planted on both sides of roads but also serais (inns) were constructed at each two koses.

Whatever development in trade and commerce was taken place during Medieval period was made possible due to improvement in communication system. Rapid development of trade and commerce was also supported by the improved transport and communication systems. Medieval Emperors adopted the positive attitude towards the monetization of the economy. One more important part that led to incredible expansion of trade was the influx of the European visitors in the form of traders which led to the growth in trade. The chief centers of silk weaving were Lahore, Fatehpur Sikri, and Agra, on the other hand, Cambay, Surat and Broach in Gujarat on the western coast considered as the chief ports for the big business. Through this manuscript, we try to highlight the responsibilities and caring attitude of Mughal government toward his subject in all matter those created obstacles and tries to provide their best which resulted in a flourishing empire.

KEYWORDS- Caravan, Sarai Traveller, Trade & Security

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INTRODUCTION

Quick expansion of trade and commerce got support from improved transport and communication systems. During mughal empire, the fabulous growth of business occurred due to the arrival of the European traders to some extent. To ease transportation and communication, well planned roads were constructed which were connected with all the strategic frontier cities. For the convenience and comfort of travelers, shady trees were placed in the ground on both sides, and apart from this, serais (inns) were also constructed at every two koses.[1]

MAJOR TRADE ROUTES IN MUGHAL EMPIRE

If we talk about major trade routes and foremost Mughal highways that followed from Agra City, that was considered most major commercial town. These were several in numbers, various trade routes that originated from major towns and linked with other major trading towns and cities, for example:

- **Agra City to Surat Town of Gujarat-** Surat a major trading town of Mughal Empire had the healthy

relation with the capital, through two routes, one through Malwa and other through Rajasthan respectively. [2] William Finch gives a vivid description about thieves on this route.

- **Agra City to Patna and Dacca-** This route connected with the eastern boundaries of the Mughal Empire and this was the old route existed since the ancient time. A good number of overland routes as well as the riverine route, ran parallel and due to this reason anyone could select whichever out of these routes, according to ease, for example Manrique, who traveled on this route via river way up to Allahabad and used another way (land route) after that. Manucci also another example of traveler who used both the route in his travel. Many travelers' account covers of various stages along the land-route like Tavernier and Petermundy.
- **Agra City to Kabul-** Many visitors visited on this route during Mughal period among them father A. Monserrate (16th century A.D.) in the reign of Emperor Akbar, William Finch (1611 A.D.), Thomas Coryat (17th century A.D.) and Edward Terry (17th century A.D.), Manrique (17th century A.D.), Francois Bernier (second half of 17th century A.D.) and Tavernier and many more instances. Besides these travelers Mughal emperors themselves also exceeded alongside these routes.

Besides these, several other trade routes were famous. Few of them are referred as:

- Major trade routes between Banaras to Patna through Mughal Sarai [3]
- Trade route between Delhi to Lahore both was well connected and further, Lahore was connected to Multan [4]
- Agra and Delhi both was considered as religious, commercial and capital cities because of these major trade routes was taken place between them.
- Surat to Agra -this tour may be passed with the aid of two directions- via Ahmadabad and second via Burhanpur and Sironj. A vast set-up of trade connected with different towns, markets and ports and served as a channel of business and trade.

MODES OF SECURITY

Before the discussion about security method it is better to understand about crimes like robberies and looting the money from travelers and visitors, which they gives a vivid description regarding such incidents, faced by them. During Medieval India especially Mughal period such tragedies were faced by many foreign traveler's where as during Sher Shah's reign very strong administrative system can be seen especially about safety and security from robbers and it is quoted by historian Abbas Khan Sarwani that during his reign even an old age women could be travel with a basket, full of gold and silver without any fears of loot or theft. In the reign of Shahjahan these things happen very rare.

During Mughal India Father Montserrat, Ralph Fitch and William Hawkins and many more travelers are witness about thieves and robberies. Tavernier in "Travels in India" and Manucci in "Storio do Mogor" have recorded about free hand robberies and gives a detailed account that plundering on highways generally done by villagers and thieves and also noted the name of central and Deccan robbers tribes. In the matter of theft and robberies not only the individual thieves but also group of robbers notorious for their inhumane practices.

Like the cases of robberies on the matter of safety and Security on the routes in Mughal India numerous historians and travelogues have their own opinions on it. As per the above mentioned discussion, it seems that many routes have not

been free from thieves' and robbers but due to commercial interest rulers added more facilities on the roads so that risk of plunder could be decrease. This resulted theft through particular person became much fewer in Mughal India than through grouping running on a massive degree.

They would sometime infest the roads, plunder towns and commit robberies in the country side. Some time highway robbers were harmful for tourists because they fell upon them with some guns and robbed them being far from a town. Different punishments were provided for the crimes. They ought to simple be punished for his or her offence in the event that they were arrested earlier than that they had repented and back the looted property. [5] Several European travelers visited India among them Ralph Fitch visited India during Akbar's reign, have recorded, about the terror of thieves. They moved from one to every other place within the Empire.[6] a Persian ambassador, Sir Robert Shirley, noticed that from Thatta to Agra, even the Agra to Lahore route was not free from thieves danger. And infested with thieves' [7] No rely what the method of visit, relaxation after the day's adventure turned into essential. This changed into taken at the high-quality chain of sarais in the course of the Mughal Empire on all essential routes, situated approximately twenty miles apart on properly used routes. There were various Means of protection and safety regarding robbery and toll road robbery on alternate routes like Charan, Carvan and Sarais and so forth.

Charan

Although there was a flourished commercial condition and sufficient quantity of goods transported during mughal Period but safe journey was not guaranteed. The caravan moved from one spot to other under the protection of armed guards. The Mandelslo a German visitor, began his journey from Surat to Ahmadabad on 30 September 1638A.D. in the midst of a caravan, enough guards were available for his security. [8] Another mode of security was a tribe, called *charan*, worked as protectors of tourists and items. They escorted the travelers from one area to other for little amount of money. Both male and female charan, engaged to wait a vacationer, blanketed him by bullying the robbers to kill themselves if any harm turned into completed to the traveller. The assets in their energy lay inside the wide unfold fear that blood of Charan will carry smash on him who induced the blood to be break up. Thevenot thought about hiring a charan man and lady for his safety on the cost of two rupees in the voyage of Cambay to Surat. But later he declined his idea of it and he travelled on this route without guards and he hardly faced any risk on the way besides at one area someone called to stop but by the payment of a copper coin (paisa) he turned into happy journey. [5] This indicates that the roads had been no longer so risky.

Carvan

In comparison to caravan it was pretty dangerous to tour alone. Caravan was consisted of group of people and better option of safety on highways. In 14th century Moraccan traveler Ibn Batuta also used Caravan during his journey because he felt safety in it. Individual travelers joined caravans to gain protection. During medieval period the sort of convoy of tourists fashioned for undertaking long trips turned into referred to as a *kafila*, is a Persian and Arabic word. Thomas Coryat also wrote her mother that he always travels in the group of caravans.[6] Pietro Della Valle travelled from Cambay to Allahabad, in a caravan "which consisted of above one hundred coaches, besides footmen and horse-men, and exquisite loaded wagons....."[7] When Peter Mundy departed from Surat for Agra in November 1630A.D., he mentioned in his account his caravan consisted of 150 mans, 15-10 carts and some camels but rapidly this number increased by 1700 to 1800 folks, 250-300 carts.[8] Caravan leader was identified as Bakhshi, Mir, Salar.[9] He worked like a captain of a ship and look after the management of ship in the same pattern, Salar or Bakshi of caravan managed entire caravan into the

street. Manrique describes number of works looked after caravan-head for example deciding charges on halts, announcing the moving of the caravan and how to deal with the custom-officials etc.[10] Caravans generally travels within the subcontinent throughout the year leaving only four month of monsoon rains due to muddy tracks and inflamed river which make travel impossible in such damp season. If a service provider favored to move products in the course of this period, he needed to hire animal delivery handiest.[11]

Sarais

Another way of safe journey apart from caravan and Charan was sarai. In all the critical routes of Mughal empire there was a network of sarais or accommodations. These accommodations provide the facility of relaxation or rest[12] wherein traders and vacationer should stop their trip like the present age resort facility. The sarais mounted by Afghan ruler Sher Shah (1540-45 A.D.) and mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.) on most important routes at interval of 2 and 5 kurohs respectively and represent as rest house. [13] The sarais management was set up through the kingdom as well as non-public people catered ordinarily to a inhabitant clients who had been charged for food and lodging. Most of those caravanserais have been got support from endowments though the funding of community or cooperative bodies. The endowments used to satisfy charges by and large safeguarding of the caravanserais. In sarais, the bhatiyaras worked as attendants as well as cooks. There was not a single metropolis where sarais did not exist. A sarai were generally constructed in the city, in *pura* or in a separate vicinity. It become typically built within the shape of a rectangular and prefer cloisters divided in to several cells.[14] Architecturally, mostly sarais follow the same pattern.

Variety of brick and stone sarais have been built during Mughal era. Due to short span of time Mughal Emperor Babur's reign could not concentrate towards construction of sarai building because from 1526-30 he was busy in fighting with In Afghan and Rajpoot rulers. The same scenario was happened with Emperor Humayun also because in initial period of his reign many rivalries faced by him and from 1540-55A.D he exiled from India and lived in Persia and in 1556 he died, but still according to Manucci "Since the time of Humayun many extra sarais had been constructed upon the royal highways throughout the Empire, from one end of it to the alternative"[15] In Ain-I Akabari it is mentioned, "Everywhere additionally sarais have been constructed, which might be the consolation of vacationers and the asylum of bad strangers".[16] Akbar planned to facilitate kitchen so that readymade food for tourist or travelers could be avail without hassle and remove the fatigues of traveling inside the sarais. When Jahangir came to the throne, issued twelve decrees and discovered in the course of his realm and one among them become that "on avenue wherein there have been thieves and toll road bandits and in which the roads had been fairly distant from habitation, the jagirdars of that area had been to construct a caravanserai and mosque and dig a nicely to inspire habitation inside the caravanserai. If such locations were close to royal demesnes, the superintendent of that place turned into to carry out those measures."[17] Dozens of surviving sarais of his duration are e visible that complied with supplied and variety of sarais survive from the time of his successors, Khurram(Shahjahan) and Emperor Aurangzeb.[18] Mariam al-Zamani was the mother of Jahangir, erected a sarai on FatehputSikri- Ajmer track. Nurjahan (Mehrunnisha) wife of Jahangir also made numerous sarais on different highways. Pelsaert a Dutch traveler gives a detailed account about Nurjahan's fame for building extremely costly sarais, with all guidelines of the Empire. [19] Nurmahal sarai is a unique sample of Mughal structure by Noorjahan along the Agra-Lahore road. Not only Noorjahan but another wife of Jahangir named Khas-Mahal, also erected a sarai at Nizamuddin, Delhi, in 1642-43A.D.[20] Begamkisarai at Delhi most famous sarai constructed by Jahan Ara, eldest daughter of Shahjahan also referred as Begam Sahiba.[21] Bernier the French traveler and Manucci both speak especially of this sarai, and designated

“most stunning sarai in Hindustan”[22] Nawab Fatehpuri Begam, spouse of Shahjahan, patronized a sarai close to mosque. [23] Nawab Akbarabadi Begam constructed a sarai at Faiz Bazaar. [24] In Pharpur, situated northeast of Aurangabad, Nawab Bai, wife of Aurangzeb a sarai.[25] Manrique, accounts also tells us that “they (sarais) are every so often erected on the rate of neighboring villages, every now and then on the value of princes or wealthy and powerful men, who erect them a good way to maintain their memory inexperienced or to fulfill their consciences, and big sums are left for such works, which of their opinion are works of goodness and ideal to God.”[26] Thus organization of sarai seems to have performed an essential role in Mughal economy.

A coherent picture of the running of the Mughal sarais is provided by diverse European Travelers account in Mughal India, because whatever they saw with their naked eyes and experienced lively, they shared their view thorough their letters, diaries etc. A traveller who desired to live in sarai became allocated a room. Manucci gives a vivid picture that every sarai would possibly maintain more or less from 800 to 1000 men and women with their horses, carriages, camels and a number of them are even high figure.[27] every vacationer had the facility of a cot however he needed to possess their own.[28] Provision like entice, rice, butter and greens will be delivered in the sarais or in its neighborhood.[29] During the 17th century, the care of the travelers turned into typically taken by bhatiyarins, and other residence-keep work in the sarais turned into also carried out by using them; the male members did different jobs or labored inside the fields.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that by the approach of these modes of safety, the trouble of visitors or readers decreased to some extent. If any culprits caught by the police, the government punished those plunderers and robbers harshly. Theft was significantly punished. Mughal period of Medieval time was considered growth in urbanisation and markets also helped in increasing economy. Initially, the weekly market idea became popular, but later, several prosperous cities with the growth of the economy came in to existence. Besides the metalled highways, river transportation systems were also significant for navigation. Such projects by the rulers have been important contributing factors in the advancing the economy of the era. The mughal government not only contributed in the development of trade routes but also provided safety and security as well which make transport and communication ease with safety and push in growth in economy.

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